American G. I. Forum of the U.S.
621 Gabaldon N.W.
Albuquerque, N.M.

October 15, 1956

Mr. Bard McAllister
Farm Labor Secretary
American Friends Service Committee
1830 Sutter St.
San Francisco 15, California

Dear Mr. McAllister

I received your letter in which you ask for information on certification of bracero labor. Our experience has shown that no organization ever challenges the procedures used to certify bracero labor. The numbers needed for any one crop or any one season is a matter of opinions. And as you know, honest men differ on opinions. The Employment's Security Commission usually takes the surveys made by the farm associations as the guide for certifying need. I find that a farmer will tend to exagerate his needs for farm hands. The idea is to pick one farm and try to find the number of acres planted in whatever crop it may be. Then by asking workers or other farmers find out how much one person can harvest in one day or week as the case may be. Then find out how many persons this particular farm has requested. I am not familiar with procedures in California, but here the chances are that every farmer will over-estimate his needs. He does this in order to guarantee himself an ample supply of laborers.

Our own situation in Tucumcari was helped by the fact that some nearby counties were actually placed on a depressed list by the Federal government.

There is no way to assure the farmer local labor will be available. Not even the Employment Security can do that. All that can be said is that local labor can be attracted if the wage is at least equal to the unskilled labor jobs in the urban areas. As it turned out in Tucumcari, the publicity given the case brought out people from nearby towns and villages and the Employment Security had to warn people not to go into the area until they had cleared with their office. The local churches, GI Forum groups, and other civic organizations cooperated to the extent of finding homes and in fact welcoming the workers.

Actually, there is no specific way to assure success in challenging certification. The main idea of our own program is to appear at the hearings held for the certification of braceros. If it appears to us that the facts and figures are too high, then we go to work and we let it be known to the Employment Security Commission and the Department of Labor that we are not happy with the situation.

Please let me know what action you propose to take and what else I can do to help in this vicious cycle of poverty.

Sincerely yours,
Vicente T. Ximenes
National Chairman